

MINUTES

MONTANA SENATE 58th LEGISLATURE - REGULAR SESSION

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK AND IRRIGATION

Call to Order: By **CHAIRMAN KEITH BALES**, on January 20, 2003 at 3 P.M., in Room 422 Capitol.

ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Sen. Keith Bales, Chairman (R)
Sen. Dale Mahlum, Vice Chairman (R)
Sen. Ken (Kim) Hansen (D)
Sen. Walter McNutt (R)
Sen. Linda Nelson (D)
Sen. Gerald Pease (D)
Sen. Corey Stapleton (R)
Sen. Mike Taylor (R)

Members Excused: Sen. Sam Kitzenberg (R)
Sen. Joseph (Joe) Tropila (D)

Members Absent: None.

Staff Present: Jennifer Stephens, Committee Secretary
Doug Sternberg, Legislative Branch

Please Note: These are summary minutes. Testimony and discussion are paraphrased and condensed.

Video-Taped Committees: These minutes are in outline form only. They provide a list of participants and a record of official action taken by the committee. A video-taped recording of the meeting is available from the Montana Historical Society.

Committee Business Summary:

Hearing & Date Posted: SJ 8, 1/14/2003
Executive Action:

HEARING ON SJ 8

Sponsor: SEN. JOHN TESTER, SD 45, BIG SANDY

Proponents: Bob Quinn, farmer and grain marketer, Big Sandy
Lochiel Edwards, Vice President, MT Grain Growers
Association
Barbara Broberg, Women Involved in Farm Economics
(WIFE)
Richard Owen, MT Grain Growers Association
Elsie Tuss, grain grower, Northern Plains
Chris Christiaens, Montana Farmers Union
Dale Schuler, grain grower, Carter, MT
Brooks Dailey, Montana Farmers Union
Jim Barngrover, Alternative Energy Resources
Organization (AERO)
Russ Salsberry, grain farmer, Choteau County
Cliff Bradley, Missoula

Opponents: NONE

Opening Statement by Sponsor:

SEN. JOHN TESTER, SD 45, BIG SANDY, opened by urging the committee not to introduce genetically modified wheat or barley until the market is assured. SEN. TESTER also submitted written testimony, **EXHIBIT**(ags11a01).

Proponents' Testimony:

Bob Quinn, farmer and grain marketer, Big Sandy, submitted written testimony, **EXHIBIT**(ags11a02).

Lochiel Edwards, Vice President, MT Grain Growers Association, submitted written testimony, **EXHIBIT**(ags11a03).

Barbara Broberg, WIFE, spoke in favor of the resolution and provided each committee member with an informational workbook, **EXHIBIT**(ags11a04).

Richard Owen, MT Grain Growers Association, emphasized that he, as well as many farmers in Montana, are in support of SJ 8.

Elsie Tuss, Northern Plains, submitted written testimony, **EXHIBIT**(ags11a05).

Chris Christiaens, Montana Farmers Union, said the number of proponents assembled indicated grain and barley growers' support for SJ 8. He also asserted that the testimony from the other proponents was accurate and to the point.

Dale Schuler, grain grower, Carter, MT, explained that he had farmed in both Choteau and Teton county. He thinks that biotechnology has considerable promise for the future, but the state should not support it at this time.

Brooks Dailey, Montana Farmers Union, submitted written testimony, **EXHIBIT**(ags11a06).

Jim Barngrover, AERO, stated that he was in favor of SJ 8. He wanted to reiterate that the cardinal rule in marketing is to give the customers what they want. He explained that right now, the customers do not want genetically modified wheat.

Russ Salsberry, grain farmer, Choteau County, submitted written testimony, **EXHIBIT**(ags11a07).

Cliff Bradley, Missoula, explained that not passing SJ 8 would leave the state open to many risks as well as jeopardize relations with our foreign customers. He also said that he had heard of other states having problems with their genetic modification programs. He supports the bill because he knows other countries don't want genetically modified wheat, therefore growing modified wheat would be a clear marketing mistake.

Informational Testimony:

Pam Langley, MT Agribusiness Association, wanted to bring the committee's attention to the position of a company called Monsanto. She provided the committee with an informational brochure, **EXHIBIT**(ags11a08). She also explained that just recently, another company announced it will come out with a genetically modified strain of wheat. She offered to answer any questions.

Questions from Committee Members and Responses:

SEN TAYLOR asked **SEN TESTER** why he brought this issue forward in the form of resolution instead of a bill. **SEN TAYLOR** further emphasized that a resolution sends a message, but certainly doesn't have the impact a bill would have. **SEN TESTER** explained that bills concerning the same subject as his resolution are bound to come up again during this session. **SEN TESTER** explained that he found it important to get the issue out in the open and

relay how many Montana grain producers are feeling about the issue of genetic modification.

SEN TAYLOR expressed to **Bob Quinn** that he finds it inevitable genetically altered wheat and barley will become the trend. He just doesn't know if it will support Montana's prices. He wanted to know if genetically modified wheat might increase the price of a bushel of wheat. **Mr. Quinn** answered by using the canola industry as a case study. That genetically modified crop did not see a benefit even though money was saved by not having to spray as often. He added that money might not be saved for Montana farmers as well because here crops are rarely sprayed more than once anyway.

SEN NELSON asked **Barbara Broberg** for her interpretation of what she meant by her words, "at this time". She was curious if she would have a change of opinion if the bill went to the house. **Barbara Broberg** answered no. She meant "at this time" to mean the Montana legislative session of 2003.

Closing by Sponsor:

SEN TESTER ended by saying there are two things in the US that, if changed, would change our society forever: one is our public education system and the other is the family farm unit. He finds SJ 8 would ensure the survivability of the family farm unit in the state of Montana.

INFORMATIONAL MEETING

SEN BALES made a motion to authorize the use of a particular proxy vote form.

SEN STAPLETON seconded the motion for the committee to authorize the use of proxy voting by committee members leaving with written proxy form with another committee member. The written proxy must be provided to the secretary. He also noted the language for this proposition was provided by legal advisors and was designed to safeguard the committee members from legal challenges.

Motion/Vote: Motion made to allow **PROXY VOTING**. Motion carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment: 3:45 P.M.

SEN. KEITH BALES, Chairman

JENNIFER STEPHENS, Secretary

KB/JS

EXHIBIT (ags11aad)